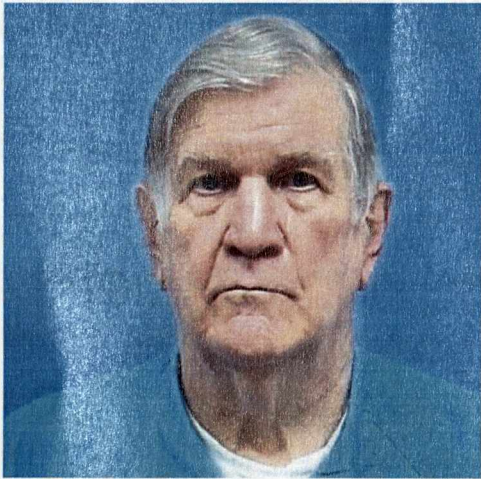


Convicted killer Fred Grabbe due for parole in mid-July

Wabash Valley farmer was twice convicted of his killing his wife

Tribune-Star staff report

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Fred Grabbe

A former Clark County, Illinois, farmer twice convicted of killing his wife is about to be paroled from prison.

Fred Grabbe, 83, is due for mandatory supervised release on July 15, according to online records of the Illinois Department of Corrections. An Illinois prisons spokeswoman confirmed the release date. Grabbe is in the Dixon Correctional Center in northwestern Illinois.

His wife, formerly Charlotte Sue Gore, disappeared from the couple's farm near Marshall, Illinois, in July 1981 at the age of 39.

Grabbe denied killing his wife but was convicted in 1985, with that conviction being overturned in 1987.

Grabbe was convicted again in April 1988 and, in August 1988, he was sentenced to 75 years in prison by Champaign County Judge Robert Steigmann. The judge said the killing seemed "like the plot of a horror movie," according to Tribune-Star archives.

Authorities in their investigation found a letter in a safe-deposit box in which Charlotte Grabbe — seeking her second divorce from Fred Grabbe — wrote, "I'm not sure I will not be killed. I'm trying to get the farm for my son and I."

Grabbe's former girlfriend, Vickie Jane McCalister, was a trial witness. She testified Grabbe choked his wife to death because he wanted to see if she'd die with her eyes open and made comments like, "Bet you wish you would have left me alone now, huh."

Grabbe, with McCalister present, allegedly put his wife's body in a 55-gallon drum and burned it near the Wabash River. He eventually dumped the contents of the drum into the river, throwing the head in separately.

Steigmann in 1988 declined to issue a life sentencing, apparently referencing Grabbe's epilepsy when he said, "With the concerns that I have about him, I don't think it's appropriate to sentence him to life in prison. But I do believe he needs to be behind bars until he is at a point where he will be of no harm to anyone if he is allowed out."